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[006] Delimbing machines with feed rollers are used to delimb felled trees. An example of such a delimbing machine is disclosed in United States Patent No. 4,972,890 (Islay 1990). The delimbing machines have a boom which is capable of extending and retracting. Grapple arms are provided on a remote end of the boom. The delimbing machines are also provided with feed rollers and a transversely positioned circular saw. The circular saw blade moves from a stored position to an operative position. In the stored position, the circular saw blade is partially retracted within a saw head compartment. In the operative position, the circular saw blade extends from the saw head compartment.

[007] In operation, the machine operator extends and lowers the boom to engage a felled tree with the grapple arms. The machine operator then raises the boom to lift the felled tree off the ground and retracts the boom until the felled tree is engaged by the feed rollers. The grapple then slightly releases its grip on the felled tree and the feed rollers propel the felled tree through a tree guide tube. Delimbing cutters are provided which serve to delimb the tree as it is propelled through the tree guide tube. Once the tree has been delimbed, the feed rollers propel the delimbed tree back through the tree guide tube. The saw is actuated at selected intervals and moved from the stored to the operative position to cut the delimbed tree into desired lengths.

[012] According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for reducing damage caused to a circular saw blade on a delimbing machine. There is provided a saw head compartment of a delimbing machine. The saw head compartment having an access door with an inside surface. At least one contact member is mounted to the inside surface of the access door of the saw head compartment. The at least one contact member is positioned immediately adjacent to and spaced radially inwardly from a lower circumferential peripheral edge of the circular saw blade when in a retracted position within the saw head compartment. Lateral movement of the lower circumferential peripheral edge of the circular saw blade is confined by the at least one contact member engaging a first face of the circular saw blade along the lower circumferential peripheral edge.

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1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for reducing damage caused to a circular saw blade on a delimbing machine, the method comprising the step of:

mounting at least one contact member to an inside surface of an access door of a saw head compartment, the at least one contact member being positioned immediately adjacent to and spaced laterally and radially inwardly from a lower circumferential peripheral edge of the circular saw blade when in a retracted position within the saw head compartment, such that lateral movement of the lower circumferential peripheral edge of the circular saw blade is confined by the at least one contact member engaging a first face of the circular saw blade along the lower circumferential peripheral edge.

2. (CANCELED)

3. (ORIGINAL) The method as defined in Claim 1, there being more than one contact member.

4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An apparatus for reducing damage caused to a circular saw blade on a delimbing machine[[s]], comprising:

a saw head compartment of a delimbing machine, the saw head compartment having an access door with an inside surface;

at least one contact member mounted to the inside surface of the access door of the saw head compartment, the at least one contact member being positioned immediately adjacent to and spaced laterally and radially inwardly from a lower circumferential peripheral edge of the circular saw blade when in a retracted position within the saw head compartment, such that lateral movement of the lower circumferential peripheral edge of the circular saw blade is confined by the at least one contact member engaging a first face of the circular saw blade along the lower circumferential peripheral edge.

5. (CANCELED)

6. (ORIGINAL) The apparatus as defined in Claim 4, wherein there is more than one contact member.

7. (NEW) An apparatus for reducing damage caused to a circular saw blade on a delimbing machine, the apparatus comprising:

a saw head compartment, for a delimbing machine, having an access door with an inside surface;

a saw blade rotatably supported within the saw head compartment;

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at least one contact member mounted to the inside surface of the access door of the saw head compartment, the at least one contact member being positioned adjacent but spaced laterally and radially inwardly from a circumferential peripheral edge of the circular saw blade, and when the saw blade, during operation thereof, is biased laterally, a circumferential side face of saw blade contacts and is confined by the at least one contact member to resist further lateral movement of the saw blade and minimize damage thereto

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